

# Modernization Program At VAAP

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The Volunteer Army Ammunition Plant noted its 30th anniversary during 1971, the sixth year of its current activation for the Vietnam War.

The year saw a reduction in work force and operating facilities as a result of lessened needs for TNT but at the same time a massive modernization program continued at the installation.

During the year also, Atlas Chemical Industries Inc., operating contractor of the plant, became a part of Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd. The merger made Atlas a part of one of the largest international chemical complexes in the world.

"A successful, productive year" was the term used by Norl Hamilton, plant manager in describing the period. He cited particularly the plant safety record which showed no disabling injuries for the year and established all-time records at the plant, and the progress of the modernization program which will make VAAP one of the most modern TNT facilities in the world when complete.

"All of us are happy," he said, "to see the need for our product lessen because it means the closer approach of peace in the world. The fact that it necessitated a reduction in force is regrettable, but a fact of which all of us have been well aware."

He added, however, that he could foresee no further reduc-

tion in force during 1972. "We seem to have a firm schedule that will insure production at or near the present levels during the coming year," he commented, adding, however, that all production would be based upon the quotas set for the plant by the Army.

## TWO TNT LINES

The plant now is operating two TNT lines on a schedule that went into effect in mid-December. The year began with five lines operating, then went to three lines in February. Reduction in force during the year has been by about 500 employees. The present work force totals almost 800 employees, down from a total of some 2500 at the peak of operations.

The most significant advances at VAAP, outside of its continuing fulfillment of production commitments, was the progress in the modernization program. The first segment of the total program consisting of new acid production facilities, three new TNT lines, and various support facilities, progressed well despite inclement weather conditions which at times slowed construction.

Projects under construction in the new acid area are to cost more than \$36.5 million; the three new TNT lines will cost \$13.1 million. In addition, there are other projects underway which are not funded under modernization funds. One of these is construction of an automatic data processing building, another is the com-

plete rehabilitation of the plant's Red Water plant, a waste disposal unit of World War I vintage.

All of the acid projects are scheduled for completion in early 1972, according to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers which is overseeing the construction. Present plans call for completion of the first three TNT lines in June 1973.

These projects are but the first segment of a three-phased program which was developed by the operating contractor to make VAAP one of the most technologically advanced of all TNT plants. The last two phases, to be completed consecutively, will provide VAAP with 10 continuous process TNT lines and support facilities. The overall cost of the moderniza-

tion program will approach \$140 million.

However, the savings achieved through increased production and better quality is expected to pay for the first segment projects in 3.5 years after completion and for the entire program in about 5 years.

A prototype project being tested at VAAP is a direct digital control facility which will make VAAP the first plant in the world to have completely automated TNT lines. Another prototype project involving pneumatic transfer of TNT will give the plant another first in TNT-manufacturing technology.

"We are proud of our modernization program and our other achievements at the

plant," commented Mr. Hamilton, "but we are most proud of our safety record. Our primary concern has always been to work safely, then to worry about volume and quality."

Mr. Hamilton, together with new commanding officer Lt. Col. Edward J. Bourgeois, who reported to the plant in November, recently accepted the Army Materiel Command Award of Honor for its safety record in fiscal year 1971. This annual award, which was presented by Brig. Gen. Peter G. Olenchuk, Commanding General of the Army Procurement and Supply Agency, is the highest given by the command.

In October, the plant passed five million manhours of work without a disabling accident. In February 1972, the second consecutive year of safe operations will have passed. As 1971 ended, VAAP had passed 683 days of operation without a lost-time injury.

During the year the plant continued to purchase a great deal of materials locally, many of them from small businesses, adding to the total of \$106 million spent on such materials since 1965.

"We have had a gratifying year in which we have fulfilled our mission to national defense," Mr. Hamilton concluded. "In addition, VAAP has continued its successful efforts to become a valued corporate citizen of the Chattanooga community."